

524 THOMAS PAINE VINDICATED.

BEING

A SHORT LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF LANDAFF's REPLY

TO

THOMAS PAINE's

AGE OF REASON.

God forbid that the Search after Truth should be discouraged for fear of its Consequences! The Consequences of Truth may be subversive of Systems of Superstition, but they never can be injurious to the Rights, or well founded Expectations of the Human Race.

Bishop Watson.

Let thy fair Wisdom, not thy Passion sway.

Shakespeare.

BY A DEIST.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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THEO. TAS. SAINT VINCENT

1814

A SHORT LETTER

BISHOP OF CANNARY ISLANDS

THOMAS ALAN

TO THE READER

It is the duty of every Christian to be well informed of the state of his own soul, and of the state of the Church of God in the world. This is the duty of every Christian, and it is the duty of every Christian to be well informed of the state of his own soul, and of the state of the Church of God in the world.

By the Rev. A. B. B.

BY A. B. B.

THE SECOND EDITION

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following letter is the substance of a few *marginal* notes, made with a pencil, while reading the Bishop of Landaff's Answer to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason.—They were scratched in haste, amidst the frequent interruptions of a young family and domestic affairs.

Fine language is not affected; indeed, the *less* of it, the better.

If any *one* thing is more desirable than another, it is an *universal tongue*, as incapable of sophistry, and as unerring in its *deduction*, as arithmetical calculation; and as *clear* and *decided* as algebraical, mathematical, or astronomical *precision*.

In

In *such* a language, the *word of God* would probably have been written, if, besides the book of the creation, any book of the Deity had been necessary.

If *such* a language should ever be brought about, it will establish *right thinking, right acting, and human good*; and do away that *babbling, delusive, and very mischievous* thing called ELOQUENCE.

MY LORD,

You begin your Reply to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, by stating, that you think it not *inconsistent* with your *station*, to answer it.

I do not know, my Lord, any thing about your *station* that lifts you *above* other men; that exempts you from doing what you *ought*, or makes it excusable for you to do *less*.

B

Sterne

Sterne observes, " He that does a *dirty* thing, is a *dirty fellow* ;" and, by the same rule, he that does a *good* thing, is a *good fellow*.

—Pope says,

Honour and fame, from *no condition* rise,
Act well *your part*, there all the *honour* lies.

and this is enough about *station*.

You proceed—" I have no reluctance in acknowledging, that Mr. Paine possesses a considerable share of energy of language, and acuteness of investigation."

Surely this is very *pusful* and *ostentatious*.—The long and short of the matter is, Thomas Paine and you, write on the same subject. You meet fairly and equally as men ; nothing more need be said about it.

Public insecurity, and private unhappiness, arise out of taking systems of religion, or government, upon *trust* ; and the investigation of truth, and all prejudice apart, abiding by her

sacred

sacred enquiries and discrimination, can alone lead to *general good*, and to *individual comfort*.

No religion, government, or science, is worth *solicitude*, that will not bear *enquiry*.

These, and such like observations, have for years appeared to me to be undeniable axioms, and by them I will examine some remarks in your "Apology for the Bible," in answer to Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*.

You say to him, "I hope there is no want
 " of charity in saying, that it would have been
 " fortunate for the Christian world, had your
 " life been terminated before you had fulfilled
 " your intentions of publishing your thoughts
 " upon religion."—Surely, *this* is paying Thomas Paine a great *compliment*, and the Christian world a very *bad* one.—You continue, "In
 " accomplishing your purpose, you will have
 " unsettled the faith of thousands, rooted from
 " the minds of the unhappy virtuous, all their
 " comfortable assurance of a future recom-

" pence ; have annihilated in the minds of the
 " flagitious all their fears of future punish-
 " ment ; you will have given the reins of the
 " domination of every passion, and have con-
 " tributed thereby to the introduction of the
 " public insecurity and private unhappiness,
 " usually, and almost necessarily, accompany-
 " ing a state of corrupt morals."

All this may be *very fine*, but surely it is not
very true. It is written *professionally* and *bishop-*
like, but it will not bear examination ; there
 are people, and I am one of them, who believe
 just the *reverse* of this ; who believe that
 taking opinions upon *trust*, and being fright-
 ened by religious creeds and impositions, oc-
 casions all these miseries ; and that free enquiry,
 and staring truth in the face, will produce a
 conduct of *energy*, *virtue*, and *rectitude* ; will
 create and establish the happiness of man, and
 which this very Christian religion, as hitherto
 conducted, only serves to destroy.

Years

Years ago, when a very young man, I read your "Apology for Christianity," and it was one of the first books that led me to consider the Sacred Writings, as they are called, in no respect above others as to their *divine origin*; and I was persuaded by your book *then*, as I am by your Answer to Thomas Paine *now*, that they never were meant by the Supreme Being, to be considered as his book for man's *belief* and *guidance*.

It might, it is true, as you say, "have been "fortunate for the *Christian world*, had Thomas Paine's sentiments not been published;" but pray, is it fortunate for the *world at large* to have any *Christian world at all*, and hath not man's misery and imbecility grown out of it?—hath not *bad government*, *imposition* on common sense, and the *plunder* of the honest man's property, arisen out of it?—hath not his *debasement* of mind and his *poverty* been confirmed, and his chains of *slavery*, rivetted, by *Christianity*; and under it and its various *modifications*?—Let us ask this question:

Can

Can society be *worse* than it is, and hath been, under this blessed dispensation? Can *man* live more the *enemy* of *man* than he does; and hath not *religion* been the watch-word of *imposition* and corruption? Have not *bad governments, war, rapine, and the happiness of worthy myriads of millions* been sacrificed to the **WORTHLESS FEW** at its bidding? It is the *wire* that moves the expensive *puppets* that distribute *poverty, distress, and slavery* around them.

But to return—It is such books as *yours, my Lord*, that will lead people to *suspect* the Bible not to be the *word of God*; not to be a book upon which man's *present and future happiness* depends.—You, my Lord, have a prodigious mass of intellect and knowledge; there are few men greater in some parts of science than yourself, few more highly gifted; and yet, at a very *advanced age*, after employing a life *mainly in divinity and its researches*, you are obliged to write a *large book*, to prove the validity of the Bible, &c. why, my Lord, to
be

be what you and the religionists want to make it appear to be, it should stand in need of no such *strength* and voluminous matter to support it. It should be *clear, evident, unequivocal*, and bear not the *shadows, clouds, and thick darknesses* about it that it does.

You say, "God made the Israelites the executors of his vengeance." Now, the vengeance of God, and his creating people to execute his wrath upon, &c. and all *such matter*, is to me *incomprehensible*; and if the *word of God*, it is calculated to *astound*, and involve the mind in *mystery and dissatisfaction*.

You write of the history of the world, as if you *really believed* the tale of the *first man and woman* to be matter of *fact*; the *fall of Adam and Eve* to be *true*, in the way it is told, and the world *no older* than a few thousand years. Sure, my Lord! there are very many *natural* appearances that go to prove the world *infinitely aged*, as far as our calculation goes; and it is not either improbable or unphilosophical to suppose

suppose it hath existed myriads of millions of ages.

You are a great man, but if a great and generally *wise* man, *continues* in a *profession*, and *supports* one in which there is so much *stuff*, as there is in the ordinances of the *Church*, and in the *common prayer book*, so much of *all* that is *imposing*, *absurd*, *contradictory*, and I had almost said, *blasphemous*, we have a right to suspect either his *weakness* or *design* in the *belief*, and *admittance* of books attached to and the support of such *profession*, and that *profession* having much *emolument*, *grandeur*, *wealth*, *influence*, and *aristocracy* in it.

You say somewhere in your answer to Thomas Paine—"Priests are as *impartial* as Laymen," now this, I think, is not just so, and I contend, and I believe most men will do so with me, that from *education*, *habit*, and *INTEREST*, they are not so, having *selfish views* and *pecuniary purposes* to answer, which the *Layman* cannot have upon this subject.

"The

“ The objectors to miracles have, you observe, fabricated a kind of deistical axiom, that no human testimony, can establish the credibility of a miracle.”—Whether this be so or not, this I conceive, that no testimony taken from a book very *jumbling, contradictory, absurd, cruel, and obscene* in its matter, will establish them.

A great part of your Apology is taken up to prove, that the books called the Bible, have been written by *somebody*.

Their existence proves their having been written, and who they were written by matters not one farthing; that they are not *divine*, or the *word of God*, more than any other ancient piece of literature, is all the Deists insist on.

You are too good a man, my Lord, to do as Priests formerly would have done, answer Thomas Paine's book as a *damnable heresy*, and send the author Pell-mell to the Devil; but theirs

was the *securest* way to rid the world of such matter, to *burn* the book, and its author into the bargain, and they were *right*; for *investigation* will bring out the *truth*, and shake that fabric, which *force*, *persecution*, and *ignorance* is better calculated to *keep entire*, and which the *cool* and *honest* attack of *reason* and *investigation uncontrouled*, will infallibly *destroy*.—The age of reason is dawning, and your book will accelerate its perfect light!

The *old* systems of Religion and Government must go, and every *defence* of them; and every sort of *despotism* to support them, will act as *underminers*.—*Ignorance* is passing away; as *that* goes, the work will be accomplished.—The world, perhaps for the first time, is set *rightly* a thinking, thanks in a great measure to Thomas Paine—a man, whom his *best* friends and admirers have under-rated, and whose wisdom exceeded only by his *humility* and *consistency*.

You say to Thomas Paine, “ you have done Kings and Priests all the harm you could,
“ and

“ and that without provocation,”—how is this? Hath not every man received sufficient *provocation* from *Kings* and *Priests*, in having *himself* and *family impoverished*, and his mind *debased*, and made miserable by their *imposition* on his *common sense*, and *picking* his pocket.

In page 50, you observe, “ to me it is probable, that the memory of the creation, the *seventh day*, was handed down from Adam to “ all his posterity.”—And do you, my Lord, seriously *believe*, that in *six days* God made heaven and earth, and rested on the seventh; that Adam and Eve was the first man and woman; that the world is no *older*; the story of the *apple*, &c. &c. do you *literally* believe all this?—If you *do*, you certainly are a very proper person, to endeavour to prove the Bible, to be the *word of God*,

“ That the labourer is worthy of his hire,” you say, to prove the *right* of provision for priests, it may be, that the labourer is *worthy of hire*,” but let him not be *overpaid*, or paid

at *all*, at the expence of the *poor* and *industrious*. I believe we should do better without *paid Priests*; but if they must be had, let their provision be *equal, fair, and moderate*. EIGHTEEN THOUSAND A YEAR! a coach and four, or six; *palaces, purple, and fine linen*, is a *hire* no man is *worthy of*, or can receive, but through the *medium* of other *men's misery*. But I move, that till priests exhibit more practical christianity, more virtue in conduct, and live more like the Jesus Christ they *affect* to follow, that they receive *no hire at all*.

There is no two things more unlike than *Christ*, and those who call themselves his *followers*.

The *Deists* have honesty enough to say, they are *not* Christians; the Christians prove they are *not* by their conduct, and have not honesty enough to declare it.

You know nothing of Thomas Paine you say.—I wish you knew him well, he is a man
to

to be valued for his great *capaciousness* of mind, his simplicity, consistency, and honesty; a quick sense of the *proper*, and *true* upon all occasions, is his peculiar characteristic; but I affect not to draw at *this* time the character of a man, who, infinitely excels all other men I ever knew, or read of, for *judgment*, *acuteness*, *science*, *anecdote*, and *fancy*; for he is a *fine* poet.

Your proving the great *antiquity* of tythes, my Lord, I am astonished you should produce to *justify* them, and to endeavour to vindicate—such gross *plunder*, such *imposition* on society, and dead *robbery*, is the readiest way to lead us to *suspect* your *defence* of the Bible, is not so devoid of *prejudice* and *weakness* as it ought to be, to have due weight. Indeed, there are people, who will not listen with much attention to any man's defence of the Bible, who can continue in the *practice* and *support* of *baptism*, the *sacrament*, and the *church ceremonies* in general.—If they will say, he is so *weak* or *designing* as to abet and *uphold* the profession of a *bishop*, and the *ordinances* of the church of England, it is

no wonder he believes the Bible to be the *word of God*, and sets out to support its *divine* authenticity.—It does not follow at all, as you suggest, my Lord, that a man must be an “atheistical madman,” who does not believe the account of the creation, the fall of Adam, &c. a man may be the best of men, and a *true believer* in, and worshipper of, *One God*, without believing one word of this; and I will hazard an opinion, that if it is much written *about*, and *investigated* by *books* and in *conversation*, that it will soon not be literally believed; and that man will be the happier and better for overcoming the force of prejudice about it.

In the 80th page, you talk of God's wrath, and justify his wrath to man. Of this I say nothing, but that I cannot *understand* it, and that I do not like it. When Moses gave the order, that the boys and the women of the Midianites should be put to death, but that the young maidens should be kept *alive* for themselves; you say, “I see nothing in this” pro-

"proceeding, but good policy, combined with
 "MERCY;" strange *mercy* this!

You also say, the women children were not reserved for the purposes of debauchery, but of slavery; and you are very angry with Thomas Paine for suggesting the contrary.

Now, this is mere assertion, and I see nothing got by it, one way or the other; though you may say very acrimoniously, "prove this, and I will allow that the Bible is what you call it, a book of lies and blasphemy!"

What sort of women, my Lord, the *Midianitish* women were, I know not, but I believe the women of *our day* would rather be *debauched* than made slaves of, and would think the allotment less *cruel*.

From p. 106 to 111, and in many other parts of your "Apology for the Bible," you have *explained away* its being the word of God to completely yourself that they need no reply.

You

You observe somewhere—" I have come to
 " one conclusion respecting revealed religion;
 " you another, both of us cannot be right;
 " may God forgive him that is in an error."
 If this be true, I do not understand it. A
 man may be *morally* right, though *mathematically*
 wrong. No man can be *morally wrong* in what
 he believes, though what he believes may not
 be *true*—belief is not an object of the will. As
 to God's forgiving the error, this is really all
 stuff, it can be of no consequence to God, nor
 can he have any occasion to forgive what is no
 error—a man's belief.

" Now, what have we to do (you say) with
 " the numerical *contradictions* in the Bible, but
 " to attribute them, whenever they occur, to
 " this obvious source of error,—the inattention
 " of the *translator*, in writing *one* letter for
 " *another*, that was like it."—Does the *word of*
 God then, which ought to come *strait forward*,
unequivocally, and carry *conviction*, depend on
translators or the *idiom* of languages; on the
 temper of *designing* men, who have given it
 any

any drefs they like ; on *juntos*, who exclude what they *please* (the Apocrypha, &c. for instance) and admit what fuits them ? Is it to depend on *translators* and *translations*, and be fo confined as not to reach a *millionth* part of mankind ?

To me this is very fatisfactory indeed, for it certainly makes againft the pofition you wish to eftablifh ; indeed, your book, my Lord, all through, is calculated to provoke a *diffuffion* that will *forward* as much the principles of *deifm*, as fome late *monarchical* books have done thofe of *republicanifm*. The vulgar adage may be applied to the fupporters of *old* religious creeds, as well as the *political* ones—
“ The more they *ftir* the more they *fink*.”

You have converfed, you tell us, with many Deifts, and if you live long, my Lord, I predict, that you will converse with many more ; and I truft, find them very good characters, and calculated to render fociety honourable and happy.

Proof, proof, you exclaim, is what we require, and not assertion ; so much the better ; and it is proof, proof, that the advocates of Deism want, or rather do not want, for the most of it seems to be on their side ; they have not so many *private* views to answer, as *Priests* have, and the still *unpersecuting* voice of *philosophy* and *truth*, seems to be on their side almost universally.

You complain much of the scurrility of Thomas Paine.—No author had ever so little *personal abuse* in him, and amidst the *severest* conduct from *Governments*, *bodies of men*, and *individuals*, he hath persevered in *consistency*, *truth*, and *philosophy*.

Under the *specious* appearance of candour, you are not always candid, and occasionally evince much littleness and illiberality, which is meant to be the more cutting, from the *affectation* of *charity* and *temper* that it bears. Bolingbroke and Voltaire, you say, must yield the palm of scurrility to Thomas Paine.—They were

were very *great* men, my Lord ; whether they must yield the palm of *scurrility* to him, or whether there is any *scurrility* in the matter, I cannot tell, but this will be pretty generally acknowledged, they must yield the palm of *conviction* to him ; and that he will take the lead in *effect* infinitely of both these, and writers on *your* side the question.

“ Permit me (you say to Thomas Paine) to
 “ state to you, what would in my opinion,
 “ have been a better mode of proceeding ;
 “ better suited to the character of an honest
 “ man, sincere in his endeavours to search out
 “ truth.—Such a man in reading the Bible,
 “ would, in the first place, examine whether
 “ the Bible, attributed to the Supreme Being,
 “ any attributes *repugnant* to sobriety, truth,
 “ and *justice* ; whether it represented him as
 “ subject to human infirmities, &c.”—Now I
 do not know that *scurrility* may be applied, as
characteristic of the first part of this paragraph,
 but it strikes me as very *uncharitable*, *illiberal*,
 and *unbecoming*.

I have before said what I know Thomas Paine to be, and I wish every man was as *honest* and *sincere* in his endeavours “to search out truth,” and as incorrupt in his *intercourses*, we should then, my Lord, have very soon very little error in the world in either *theory* or *practice*. As to the latter part of this sentence, you are calling upon Thomas Paine to do, what he hath very *convincingly* done, and what every unprejudiced reader of the Bible *must* do—discover that it attributes to the Supreme Being, attributes *repugnant* to sobriety, truth, and justice.

In page 207, 209, you have a *fine* passage, in reply to Thomas Paine’s saying,—“I have
 “gone through the Bible, as a man would
 “go through a wood, with an axe on his
 “shoulder, and fell trees; here they lie, and
 “the Priests, if they can, may replant them;
 “they may perhaps stick them in the ground,
 “but they will never grow.”—Here, my Lord, you fly off to me very unintelligibly.—“You
 “have lost your way on the mountains of Le-
 “banon,

“banon, the goodly cedar trees whereof lamenting the madness, and pitying the
 “blindness of your rage against them, have
 “scorned the blunt edge, and the base temper of your axe, and laughed unhurt, at the
 “feebleness of your stroke.”——Hey Presto! here’s your works!—this is *very, very* sublime, *very liberal*, and *very convincing*; somewhat after Burke’s manner!—O rare goodly trees of Lebanon! Thomas Paine’s base, blunt edged axe, shall not injure you!

Amongst other complainings against Thomas Paine, you say, “he has perplexed the
 “minds of honest men, who wish to worship
 “the God of their fathers in sincerity and
 “truth;” this is assertion, and I believe *false* assertion; for I think the writings of Thomas Paine, and all *fair*, not to say *unfair* discussion, is the way to *unperflex* the mind, and the day of *unperflexing* people’s minds seems to be at hand, both in *religion* and *politics*; so shall more of that sincerity and truth you allude to, be, and increase in the world; to
 find

find it *now* is *difficult*, notwithstanding we are such a *believing, professing, religious, well-governed Church* and *State* people.

In alluding to the miraculous conception, which Thomas Paine esteems a fable, and it certainly sounds more like a fable than any thing else, you quote the angel's declaration to Mary, as matter to prove the *incarnation*—
 “ The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and
 “ the power of the highest shall overshadow
 “ thee, therefore that holy thing which shall
 “ be born of thee, shall be called the *Son of*
 “ *God.*”

To believe this, we must believe the conversation of angels with men literally; but of this angel to Mary what of it?—the passage implies not to me, even then that Mary's child, Jesus Christ, was begotten but by Joseph, and this is so natural withal;—the other is so *unnatural, obscene*, not to say *blasphemous*, and so very equivocally expressed, that I confess it carries no conviction to me, and it seems
 alto-

altogether more likely to have grown out of the heathen story of Jupiter's intrigues on earth, &c. and tales of that sort.—See First Part of the Age of Reason.

From p. 224, through several pages on, you admit, my Lord, so much of the *looseness*, and *inaccuracy* of the Testament detail, that it goes very far to do away the notion of its being the *word of God*, which should be more *clear, distinct*, and less *contradictory*, to advantage your argument.

After this comes a long tracing of genealogy; this may be worth your and Thomas Paine's investigation, but I have always *felt* that it is not worth mine, and I am totally indifferent about it.

Thomas Paine says, “ who would now believe a girl, who should say she was gotten with child by a ghost ” This question you call abominably indecent and profane. Now, I cannot see it either the one or the other; and it may be fairly answered; no person would believe

believe it, nor is it any way *essential* to our happiness, that we should *believe the incarnation*.—*Believers* who swallow such notions as these, are, I dare assert, believers upon *trust*, and examine *not*; and have been frightened for corrupt purposes, to *profess creeds*, which to be *happy*, society must do away, and not *uphold*.

It is well said by Dr. Young,

“ *Truth* never was indebted to a *lie*.”

“ Thomas Paine, you observe, will never
 “ persuade the world that the Holy Spirit of
 “ God, has any resemblance to the stage
 “ ghosts of Hamlet or Macbeth; from which
 “ you seem to have derived your idea of it.”
 Where Thomas Paine got his idea of ghosts
 I never heard him say, but such ghosts as you,
 my Lord, allude to above, are, I fancy, in
 most peoples belief, the likeliest to get chil-
 dren.

I ask no excuse for thus treating the sub-
 ject;—let every man have the liberty of treat-
 ing

ing a subject, as he pleases. I have no reason to be *grave* about it ; no *interest* in its being believed or not ; let those who have, be *solemn*, *serious*, *overbearing* and *angry*.

The allusions you make about the *authenticity* of events, do not seem to me to be at all happy.—The events you advert to, were mere *human* events ; they involve no belief of the *incarnation*, and such *incomprehensible* matter, and therefore are not *in point*.

You say to Thomas Paine,—“ You certainly have read the New Testament, but “ not, I think, with great attention.”—I believe you are right, my Lord, that he never *studied* that book ; and I think it is very well for his *opponents* he has not ; for, if he had, judging from what *some* attention to it hath done, he would have bothered you still more, and as it is, he hath made *objections* to Christianity, and *word of God believers*, that are not removed that I see.

I do not know what illustrious characters Thomas Paine calls liars, fools, and knaves; but this I do know, mankind have had their understandings shockingly *imposed* on, and their pockets *drained*, by characters in high *situations* and *stations*, and that *surreptitious* and *false consequence*, hath miserably *debased* and *enervated* their minds, and villainously *plundered* them.

In the whole course of your Apology, you manifest great foreness at the way in which Thomas Paine mentions the priests. Now, this I wonder at, not only because it looks like being *hurt*, but because the observations on this head are generally *fair*, and such observations are generally *allowed* to be so. It is only doing what priests themselves have always done *of one another*; their lives have been made up of *differences* and *revilings*—*differences* even about this *very* book, the Bible and Testament; for religionists differ so greatly about it, and each of them objecting to the admittance of *certain parts* they have at one time or another *themselves* upset and denied the *validity* and

divine

divine authenticity of the book. There can be no doubt but that priests of all ages, and all sects, have stood in the way of man's happiness : robbed him and made him miserable.

Speaking of the Sacred Writers, as they are called, you say, “ had they been impostors, “ they would have written with more caution, “ and have obviated every cavil, and avoided “ every appearance of contradiction ; this “ they have *not* done, and this I consider as a “ proof of their *honesty* and *veracity*.” This is reasoning indeed, but it is greatly against yourself ; and I will engage, that the majority of readers do not think with you, that this is matter of *proof* in your *favour*, more than many other of your following pages. You say, “ there is nothing in Deism but what is in “ Christianity ; but there is much in Christi- “ anity which is not in Deism ;” there is, indeed, much of what Deism hath *not*—*contradiction, mystery, and unintelligibility*.

It is by no means true, that the doubts of a Deist, of a future state, are greater than those of the Christian. The fact is, Christians, as they are called, take things on *trust*, and adopt, as a *fashion* or *habit*, what they have *never examined*;—let them set about *examining*—this will make them *really, truly, and at heart, of some belief*; this will give them *fixt principles*, and I have no doubt, *mend* their conduct, *increase* their energies and virtues, and do away much vice, which *forms*, and *religious creeds*, have made them set down quietly under.

Indeed, indeed, my Lord, Christians must exhibit infinitely more *rectitude* of manners, and *greatness* of mind, before they will make their profession *respected*, or the truth of their system *believed*. They must, my Lord, have much less of the pomps and vanities of the world; much less *lust* of *wealth*, and the other sinful pursuits of *the flesh*, before their holy religion will be held sacred, or escape suspicion of *validity*.

“ The

“ The Christian admits, you observe, the
 “ Providence of God, and the liberty of
 “ human actions ; the Deist is involved in
 “ great difficulties, when he undertakes the
 “ proof of either.”——You are right in say-
 ing the Christian *admits* ; the people called
 Christians, do indeed *admit* a wonderful deal,
 and a wonderful deal more than they *believe*, or
 have ever troubled their heads to *reflect on* or
investigate ; but when they *enquire*, instead of
admitting, they are involved in the same diffi-
 culties as the *Deist*.—The case is, the Provi-
 dence of a God, and the liberty of human
 actions, may be as readily *denied*, or *admitted*,
 by the *Deist*, as the *Christian* ; but has man’s
happiness any thing to do with it, and is it not
 like other metaphysical points, mere matter of
speculation, and may it not be admitted by
some, and *denied* by others, without any *in-*
fringement of the comforts of society. It is
 not speculation, but adopting speculations
 into *imposing creeds*, and making matter of mo-
 ney, or influence *of them*, that does the mis-
 chief.

Thomas

Thomas Paine asserts, there was no such book as the New Testament, till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived ; this you affect to disprove, but by no means do it, and after collecting all your strength and authorities, only leave a matter *doubtful, vague, and unexplained*, that ought to substantiate your opinions, to be as *clear as light*, and the quoting JUSTIN MARTYR, or any other authority, is weakening the fabric you want to erect ; for the doctrines you want to prove, ought to stand *full, clear, and unequivocal*, and be *felt* and acknowledged, without having all this uncertain matter to make them be understood. According to your account, FAUSTUS's authenticity, &c. ought not to be received—why then MARTYR's, &c. &c.

When Thomas Paine objects to the evidence of Paul in the case of his being struck to the ground, when journeying to Damascus, and his hearing a voice issuing from the lightning, speaking to him in the vulgar tongue,
you

you tell him to read Lord Littleton's Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul.—Surely this, my Lord, is childish, and *unargumentative*. The opinions of Lord Littleton on this subject, must, to be sure, have great weight.—If a *Lord cannot* prove a *Saint* to be *right*, we are badly off certainly !

As to your observations about holy men, and holy things, and Thomas Paine's abuse of them, the fact is, you do not think the *same* men and things, *holy* ; and in point of acrimony, the Bishop of Landaff is not behind Thomas Paine ; the latter, I think, abundantly *fuller* of proof all through his book, and I do not believe with you, if you *do* believe it, that the holy men, and holy things you allude to, will be remembered, when Thomas Paine and his arguments are forgotten. If this should happen, so be it ; to search, investigate, and have opinions, can alone secure man's happiness ; and his being wise and good, can *only* arise out of the destruction of all civil and religious *impositions* and *oppressions*.

“ The

“ The Bible, you exultingly exclaim, has
 “ withstood the learning of *Porphry*, and the
 “ power of *Julian*, to say nothing of the
 “ manichean *Fauftus* ;—it has resisted the
 “ genius of *Bolingbroke*, and the wit of *Vol-*
 “ *taire* ;” and so you infer it is to stand for
 ever. The old French government flourished
 many ages, and withstood the attacks, and
 triumphed over the assaults of the *wisest* and
best, but it *went at last*.

But it is not just as you state it, for the Bible
 hath not *withstood* the attacks of its contro-
 versies and objectors, but it hath considerably
 and greatly *lost its value* in the minds of *many* ;
 and a blind confidence *in it*, and *those* who have
 created it, into *creeds* and *systems of impositions*,
 hath abated in *many, many* thousands, and an
 improper respect for it and them, is daily *wear-*
ing away, and that amongst those, whom the
 stale malignant observation of priests cannot
 be brought against,—that men of bad morals
 and manners are alone its enemies.

You

You say, “ No, Sir ; no, this miserable stuff,
 “ this blasphemous perversion of Scripture ;
 “ that the Almighty committed debauchery
 “ with a woman, is not the doctrine of the
 “ New Testament ;”—how is this ? if not,
 surely your doctrine of the *incarnation* goes to
 the ground. If Christ was not the *Son* of
 God, whose son was he ? Your observation,
 here, seems to me to be *quibbling*, as well as
 abusive. If you do not mean to *prove* Christ
 the *Son of God*, what do you mean to *prove* ?
 If the Son of God, how begotten ?

A little after this, you tell what the Scrip-
 ture teaches—“ to them that have done evil,
 “ the resurrection unto damnation”—this is
 a *hard* word, and very unlike the word of
 God I think. Your alluding after this to the
 excellent moral sentiments of the New Testa-
 ment, hath nothing to do with it : their *excel-
 lence* is not denied ; the didactic part of the
 New Testament is held in as much respect, and
 as much valued, by *Deists* as by *Christians* ; and
 it makes no part of their *interest* to believe

any farther, or to induce others to do so. Priests, I again say, have an *interest* in doing so, or I am wrong informed of the Church revenue (the *established Church only*) of this country, which I conclude is about twenty-five hundred thousand pounds more, yearly, than the whole expence of the government of America.

As to your rant, my Lord, about *spurious* philosophy, democratic society, and equalization of property, it is altogether beneath you, or any man of *common sense*, and *common honesty*; *equalization of property* hath *nothing to do* with Thomas Paine, or his *principles*; and this part of your *Apology for the Bible* deserves no answer. We understand this, and all about it, and so, and where it comes from; so good bye to it; it makes to be sure, a part of *the Bible story*.

The sag end of this paragraph contains a great truth. This is the *wise* observation: "No man has a right to do wrong." No, my Lord! nor any set of men, how high soever in *title*, *power*, or *rank*, *civil* or *religious*.

The

The philosophic pages that follow, are sublime and affecting—they are sentiments common to, and belonging to all men, and are more likely to acquire force, beauty, and energy, under a system of *Deism*, than that of *Christianity*.

The historically ascertaining events, and thus step by step certifying them, does not prove *revelation* :—it proves a regular succession of account, but *that* does not *validate* the *first rumour* ; for there may be as *regular* a detail of a lie, as of a truth. Your reply, my Lord, most likely is : but why suppose the circumstance *itself* false ;—I answer, Because it doth not accord with what hath *generally* been ; is *inconsistent* with the regular laws of nature, the *dignity* and *beauty* of its author's universal works and proceedings, and calculated too generally to *impose* on the understandings, and *pick* the pockets of society.

You telling Thomas Paine, my Lord ! that Sir Isaac Newton was a Christian, is tacitly saying, *and you ought to be so, because he was.*

Suppose

Suppose a bishop in Sir Isaac Newton's day, had told him, he had no right to think *differently* from *Copernicus*, as a natural philosopher; would this have been most *reasonable* or *absurd*?

The Christian religion itself was once an *innovation*, and is now rejected by above three-fourths of mankind, who hold other religious opinions.

At the conclusion of your book you say, You will not reply to any answer to it; whether this arises from conscious vulnerability, or self-sufficiency, I know not; but this I know, it neither recommends yourself, or strengthens your cause.

Sincerely wishing, that you may become a partaker of that faith in Deism, which is the foundation of my happiness in this world, and of all my hopes in another, I bid you farewell!

A DEIST

